Serpent Crest part four - The Hexford Invasion, by Paul Magrs

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WIBBSEY [narrating]: It was a Thursday in August, and I'd risen late. Not at all like me, but a bad habit I'd got into and one which I couldn't seem to shift. I drew back my bedroom curtains and looked across into next door's garden. There she was again, just like every other morning. I couldn't stick the sight of her. I know it wasn't very neighbourly of me, but that's how I felt. There was just something about her that put my hackles up. Every morning it was the same. She'd swan off down the garden wearing that hat and big gloves and all that netting, carrying that set of bellows pumping out smoke. So as I'd done countless times before, I dashed downstairs and out the back, creeping alongside the hedge which bordered our two gardens. From there I watched as she tended her flock. It's ridiculous, I know, a woman of my age reduced to hiding the bushes in her nightie and spying on the neighbours. But you see, there were hives at the bottom of next door's garden, tall painted chalets teeming with millions of plump, buzzing insects, and just that simple sound could make me feel like I was going doolally again. So, there I was, watching the next door neighbour, the grand lady novelist, Tish Madoc. She hadn't long moved in, but she'd already ingratiated herself in the village. Even her cousin, Deirdre wotsit, who lived in the house on the other side of Nest Cottage, and who had until recently been quite a bosom pal of mine, seemed to be completely under her spell. (Welsh accent) She's a very pleasant woman, Mrs Wibbsey, (normal) she'd say to me, (Welsh) if a bit fancy. She's from the posh side of our family. (normal) I just couldn't stand the sight of her, floating about, talking to those insects. I tried to tell myself I'd gone bananas on account of being left all alone at Nest Cottage. It had been nearly nine months now since I'd been dumped back there by the Doctor. He'd gone off in the Tardis in December, and now the village of Hexford was basking in the heat of late summer. At least, some folk were basking. I was too worried about what might be incubating in Tish Madoc' garden. Oh, how I hoped and even prayed that the Doctor would come back to tell me I was being silly, and make everything seem right. Then I soon realised it's true what people say. You've got to be careful what you wish for.

TONGE: Ah, there you are, Mrs Wibbsey. Popping out for some provisions, are you?
WIBBSEY: Afternoon, Reverend Tonge. I'm just in need of some pan scourers.
TONGE: We don't seem to see you around the village as much as we used to. I do hope I can count on you for tonight's meeting at the Church Hall.
WIBBSEY: What's that?
TONGE: Our meeting. About the Hexford Christmas show.
WIBBSEY: Oh, I see.
TONGE: Everyone was enthralled at your dancing the can-can during the Easter parade, and so I rather hoped you'd be auditioning for a major part.
WIBBSEY: Mmm, well, I'll have to see. I really don't know what my commitments will be, what with the Doctor away. I'm not sure.
TONGE: Yes, he does flit about a bit, doesn't he. Funny chap.
WIBBSEY: Do you think so?
TONGE: You must admit he's a bit eccentric, Mrs Wibbsey. He makes one feel rather nervous with that abrupt manner of his. And the way he grins at one sometimes. I know that several of the villagers find him disconcerting.
WIBBSEY: I'll have you know, Reverend, that he's a very respected scientist of great renown.
TONGE: Oh, no offence intended, Mrs Wibbsey, but you can't deny he can be rather strange.
WIBBSEY: No stranger than certain others in Hexford.
TONGE: (laughs) Alas, I think you may be right there.
WIBBSEY: Like Tish Madoc, for example?
TONGE: Oh dear, you aren't going to start on this again, are you?
WIBBSEY: Well, I can't be the only one to think she's a bit suspect.
TONGE: Suspect? Mrs Wibbsey, she's a charming woman. A best-seller, one is led to believe. Her books are rather racy for a man of my predilections, but I think she's a delightful person.

WIBBSEY: She's got you all wrapped around her little finger, hasn't she? The whole lot of you.
TONGE: Mrs Wibbsey, I really don't see how
WIBBSEY: I've had enough of this. If you can't see through her veneer of charm, then I just despair, Vicar, I really do. That woman is (pause) evil, I tell you.
TONGE: Evil? Oh, really.
WIBBSEY: I don't use that word lightly. She keeps these hives, you see. Says they're for bees, but really, but really
TONGE: I think you'd better go home and calm yourself. Have a lie down with a cold flannel.
WIBBSEY: Oh, I can see that there's no point in talking about this with you.
TONGE: Good day, Mrs Wibbsey.

WIBBSEY [narrating]: I bustled home, livid. How dare he talk to me like that. How dare he not take seriously the fears of one of his parishioners. I made myself tea, and sat stiffly in the kitchen, bridling with fury. Out of the back window I could see next door's garden, and sure enough, there was the elegant and unruffled Tish Madoc, wending her way through the hollyhocks. I thought to myself, could I be going mad? Enough terrible things had happened in recent years to send me over the edge. Kidnapping, possession, deadly danger, not to mention being lost in time and space. All of those things put together might send even the most level-headed of housekeepers crackers. All the same, why was I fixating on this newcomer to Hexford? Perhaps I just didn't have enough to keep my mind occupied. Well, that was about to change. My reverie was interrupted by the sound of a vehicle parking noisily outside the cottage. I went through to the sitting room window.

WIBBSEY: Oh! Mike! Oh, it's Mike Yates, in a Jeep. Who's he got with him?
(Knocking on door.)
WIBBSEY: Soldiers. And some other funny little chap.
(Opens door.)
MIKE: Good morning, Mrs Wibbsey.
WIBBSEY: (happy) What's going on? What are you doing here?
MIKE: I expected a warmer welcome than that.
WIBBSEY: No, no, I mean, I'm really glad to see you again, Mike, but you, but you didn't phone, and you didn't say. Here, why are you in uniform? And who's this lot with you?
MIKE: Believe it or not, I've been called up again, Mrs Wibbsey. Temporarily brought out of retirement. You see, there's a bit of a situation on.
WIBBSEY: But, but.
VISITOR: May we come in, ma'am? There's rather a lot to discuss, I'm afraid, and we can't very well do it on the doorstep, now can we? You never know whose ears are twitching behind the net curtains.
(*Everyone, this is David Troughton, and he's sounding very like his father, Patrick.*)

WIBBSEY [narrating]: I turned to stare at the scruffy little stranger standing next to Mike. Flanked by two fresh-faced soldiers, the figure looked shambolic, almost tramp-like. But he was very well-mannered and so I found myself asking them all inside.

VISITOR: That's very kind of you. We don't really want to impose on you, but we've been billeted here, haven't we, Captain Yates?
MIKE: I'm afraid it's true, Mrs Wibbsey. Nest Cottage has been commandeered for the duration. Orders of UNIT. I'm afraid you'll have to put up with the lads and me.
WIBBSEY: Oh, I see. And er, er, who is this gentleman?
MIKE: Well now, this is the tricky bit. Er, Mrs Wibbsey, allow me to introduce the Doctor.
DOCTOR 2: Hello, my dear. I'm sure we're going to get along famously.

WIBBSEY [narrating]: Of course, I didn't know what to think. I hadn't seen Mike since the previous January, after he'd recovered from his tussle with the Robotov guards. Now here he was, more or less pushing me aside as he and his chums took charge of Nest Cottage. As for the little man in the shabby coat and bow tie, he was all very affable and friendly, but then he shot straight upstairs before I could stop him. I could hear him banging and clattering about amongst the Doctor's things. Meanwhile, the two young soldiers started to unload a lot of electronic equipment from their Jeep, bringing it into the house along with tray upon tray of some bizarre looking plants. Straight across the front lawn they went, bringing a whole lot of

mud in as they toed and froed,

(Occasional floorboard creak and opening and closing of doors upstairs.)
WIBBSEY: They might at least use the path, Mike.
MIKE: This must be very alarming for you. I'm sorry.
WIBBSEY: I think you'd better explain.
MIKE: I will, I promise. In due course.
WIBBSEY: Why were you calling that chap upstairs Doctor?
MIKE: Because that's who he is. Time travel, you see. He's an earlier incarnation.
WIBBSEY: What rubbish! He looks nothing like the Doctor.
MIKE: Oh dear, has he never explained regeneration to you?
WIBBSEY: He never explains anything, and I haven't seen him for months either. What's that chap doing upstairs? I hope he's not going through the Doctor's things.
MIKE: I can see you're becoming distressed.
WIBBSEY: That's an understatement. You don't know what it's been like for me these last few months.
MIKE: Just let us get on with our jobs, and everything will be all right.
WIBBSEY: And what's all this about UNIT?
MIKE: They've called me in for a special assignment. Something that demands careful handling, precisely because of him upstairs. When he got involved, he asked for someone from the olden days.
WIBBSEY: But
MIKE: Look, there's to be a public meeting tonight in the Church Hall. We'll brief everyone about the situation then.

WIBBSEY [narrating]: I didn't know why he was being so mysterious. I just watched appalled as those soldiers brought in even more gubbins.

MIKE: Do you mind if I put the kettle on, Mrs Wibbsey?
WIBBSEY: Oh no, you don't. That's at least something I can usefully do.
MIKE: It's good to be back here in Hexford.
WIBBSEY: Yes. If only the Doctor was here as well.
(Knocking on window.)
DEIRDRE: Hello-ooo.
WIBBSEY: Oh, no.
(Door opens and closes.)
DEIRDRE: (very Welsh) Hello, Mrs Wibbsey. Tish and I were passing and we saw all this activity going on. We thought we'd better check that everything was all right.
WIBBSEY: Everything's fine, Deirdre. There's nothing to worry about.
DEIRDRE: But all these soldiers, Mrs Wibbsey.
TISH: (a breathy contralto) It looks as though something *very* important is going on. And who's this rather dashing gentleman?
MIKE: Me?
WIBBSEY: This is Captain Mike Yates. Mike, these are my neighbours, Deirdre
DEIRDRE: Llanfechbrach (well, lots of phlegm-filled Welsh consonants and few vowels anyway.)
WIBBSEY: And Tish Madoc.
MIKE: Enchanté. Welsh as well, are you?
TISH: For my sins. Though I ditched the accent years ago. It didn't suit the literary life.
MIKE: Oh, you're a
DEIRDRE: Tish is my cousin
TISH: I came to visit last Christmas and just fell in love with Hexford.
DEIRDRE: Both our families were in Hexford centuries ago, but most of them moved back to Wales after the bother with the dragon. At least, that's how the story goes.
TISH: Intriguing, isn't it? And after all, every good novelist needs an inspiring environment. Delighted to meet you, Mike. It's nice to see some proper men in the village. They're mostly a load of old women, and that rather fey vicar.
DEIRDRE: (sotto) Whatever's going on, Mrs Wibbsey? All these soldiers. Have you been up to something naughty?
DOCTOR 2: What a very comfortable master bedroom. I shall sleep like a log up there, I'm

sure. What very good taste my future self has. Oh! Hello, there.
TISH: Mrs Wibbsey, you've got a man upstairs!
DOCTOR 2: Hello. I'm the Doctor.
DEIRDRE: You are? Another one?
DOCTOR 2: Occupational hazard, I'm afraid, with time travel and so on. You don't know how many of us you're liable to get.
TISH: I beg your pardon?
MIKE: A physicist joke. The Doctor is a brilliant scientist.
DEIRDRE: Forgive me, but the Doctor who usually lives her is quite different.
MIKE: That's his colleague. They're all called Doctor, you see. It gets most confusing.
WIBBSEY: I'll say.
DEIRDRE: Come along, Tish. I'm sure we're getting in the gentlemen's way. They seem very busy.
TISH: Very well, Deirdre dear. Now, Mrs Wibbsey, will you be coming to this evening's play meeting? Reverend Tonge is very keen for you to
MIKE: There won't be a play meeting tonight, ladies. The Church Hall has been commandeered. I'm calling everyone in the village to a very important meeting.
DEIRDRE: What can be more important than our annual Christmas show?
DOCTOR 2: Goodness me, just wait until we tell you, ladies. You'll be ever so surprised.

WIBBSEY [narrating]: The whole of the village hall was filled with muttered speculation that evening. As the clock chimed seven, the place was packed to the rafters. The vicar was parked to one side, looking extremely put out, and the stage was occupied my Mike and the two soldiers. There were only three of them, but with their guns and their gleaming boots they made a forceful presence. Almost threatening. Needless to say, sat in between them was the rather less impressive figure of this supposed other Doctor, playing, of all things, a child's recorder!

DEIRDRE: Mrs Wibbsey, I suspect you know more than you're saying about this business.
WIBBSEY: I'm afraid I don't.
TISH: I must say, I'm finding it rather thrilling. And that Mike is a dish. Did you notice, Deirdre, the insignia they're wearing? UNIT.
DEIRDRE: So?
TISH: UNIT is a very special organisation. They deal in some very strange areas.
WIBBSEY: How do you know anything about them?
TISH: *If* you had read any of my novels, Mrs Wibbsey, you would know that I've researched all kinds of arcane and mysterious subjects, and also the people who are involved in them.
DEIRDRE: Think there's a mystery here, do you, Tish?
TISH: Let's just say there's only one thing UNIT get involved with. Extraterrestrials.
DEIRDRE: Oh really, Tish. In Hexford?
MIKE: Ladies and gentlemen, if I may have your attention. Thank you for allowing us to commandeer your meeting hall at such short notice. As you may have guessed, we haven't asked you hear to talk about this year's pantomime.
(Scattered laughter.)
WIBBSEY: Get on with it, Mike.
MIKE: Rather, my colleagues and I have been sent here in order to protect you. The organisation I work for has become rather concerned about certain phenomena recorded in the vicinity of Hexford recently.
TISH: See? I told you.
DEIRDRE: Oh Tish, put your hand down.
MIKE: Yes?
TISH: Tish Madoc. We met earlier. When you say phenomena, you mean UFOs, don't you?
MIKE: At this stage, I can't confirm or deny anything.
TISH: See? I told you.
MIKE: We have been monitoring the skies above Hexford very carefully for some time
MAN: Yeah, yeah. Pull the other one.
(Laughter. The Doctor bangs on the table.)
DOCTOR 2: Please. Please, you must listen to him. Captain Yates knows all about these things.
TONGE: Are you saying that our village is going to be overrun by monsters from outer space?

MIKE: There's a very good chance of that, yes.
WIBBSEY: Oh dear, poor Mister Yates.
DOCTOR 2: You've got to take notice of him. We're all experts, you know. We've seen this sort of thing before. Yeti on the Underground, Cybermen in the sewers.
MAN: Who are you, Widow Twanky?
DOCTOR 2: Oh crumbs, they aren't going to listen to us, are they, Captain Yates.
MIKE: It doesn't look like it, Doctor.
DOCTOR 2: Then they are in for a very nasty surprise.

WIBBSEY [narrating]: The meeting broke up amid raucous laughter and cruel cat-calling. Captain Yates was down-hearted, but not so his new friend.

DOCTOR 2: They'll see, Mrs Wibbsey. They'll soon see, and then they'll be sorry. Oh yes indeed.
WIBBSEY: I think I've heard quite enough about it, thank you.
MIKE: Any chance of some supper, Mrs Wibbsey? I've been telling the Doctor all about your Welsh rarebit.
DOCTOR 2: And he doesn't mean Deirdre wotsit.
WIBBSEY: Huh.

WIBBSEY [narrating]: Then a very odd thing happened. As the next few days went by, this new Doctor in the village became rather popular. It seemed there was something about him which people took to. Locals slapped his back and chuckled with him about the disastrous meeting. They thought he was a great sport, getting up there and making them all laugh.

DOCTOR 2: But I meant every word of it. It's all true!
MAN: Oh, get away with you.
DOCTOR 2: The aliens are coming, I tell you.

WIBBSEY [narrating]: He'd queue in the village store for a quarter of humbugs and make the other customers chuckle at his protestations, or entertain them with a tune on his wretched recorder. They all thought he was a great fellow, and found his affected flusterings quite comical.

DOCTOR 2: Why won't you human beings ever listen to me?

WIBBSEY [narrating]: He became quite a recognisable figure in Hexford. An overnight sensation. Interestingly, he had a penchant for long evening walks on his own.

DEIRDRE: Oh, there he is, look.
TISH: Good evening, Doctor. Out for a constitutional?
DOCTOR 2: Well, I thought I really must stretch these legs of mine. Have to be fighting fit, you see, for when the aliens invade.
DEIRDRE: Oh yes. (laughs) I see.
TISH: You really believe in it all, don't you. I can see it in your eyes.
DOCTOR 2: I'm deadly serious, but everyone thinks I'm a fool. That's always been my curse.
DEIRDRE: Well, for what it's worth, I much prefer you to the other chap that used to live at Nest Cottage. Pompous and overbearing he was.
DOCTOR 2: Yes, well, we don't talk about *him*. It sets Mrs Wibbsey off into very strange moods. I understand she was very attached to him, and I don't think she likes me very much at all.

WIBBSEY [narrating]: When that got back to me, I had to ask myself, was it true? Did I dislike this new, more compact, Doctor? He certainly didn't charm me like he did the rest of the village. That twinkle in his eyes didn't do anything for me, I'm afraid. I thought he was a scruffy little article. And there were some very strange moments in those first days since his arrival, like the saga of those horrible plants which had been brought in and stuck in the hallway. They'd been left to stand there on the carpet! They were more like saplings than plants, all horrible and gnarled and slimy. I'd never seen their like. Needless to say, we had words about them.

DOCTOR 2: I'm awfully sorry. I'll have them out of your way just as soon as I can, Mrs W.
WIBBSEY: I've asked you before. Don't call me Mrs W. I'm tripping over these blessed things every time I come downstairs. It really isn't good enough. If you want to do some gardening
DOCTOR 2: All right, stop going on about it.
WIBBSEY: Pardon?
DOCTOR 2: I said, you dreadful interfering old busy-body, I will sort it out!
WIBBSEY: Well then, all right.
DOCTOR 2: Meanwhile, would you mind not sticking your pointy beak any further into my doings. You're only the housekeeper, remember?
WIBBSEY: I. Well.

WIBBSEY [narrating]: I went back to the kitchen, my face scalding hot with fury. I couldn't believe how he'd snarled at me. I mean, the other Doctor could fly off the handle, but he would never have dreamed of talking to me like that. Of course, when others were listening, this new fellow was quite different.

DOCTOR 2: Mrs W, dear, would you mind putting out a tray of tea and some of your little cakes? We're just about to have a top secret meeting in my study.
WIBBSEY: Go and boil your head.
DOCTOR 2: Oh, and Mrs W? Chop, chop.

WIBBSEY [narrating]: By this time I was feeling utterly miserable, and wishing even more fervently that *my* Doctor would return. Then later, in the middle of that night, I woke with a start. There were noises. Someone was moving about downstairs. I knew instantly who it would be. I threw on my dressing gown, the nice Chinese one that my Doctor once brought me back from his travels, and crept down to investigate. He was down in the hallway, messing about with a selection of the Doctor's gardening tools, slinging them into a canvas sack. And he was hefting up a tray of those sinister black plants, carrying it out of the front door. I thought about waking Mike Yates but then I changed my mind. His two soldiers had been billeted next door with Tish. Like everyone else in Hexford, they all thought this Doctor was a marvel, so I picked up my front door keys, pulled on my Wellington boots and followed the little man out. He was taking the plants across the village green, past the MiniMarket, beyond the old Rectory and towards the main road. He was going in the direction of Hexford Woods, the very perimeter of the village itself. It was a clear, cool, moonlit night. I hid in a thicket of brambles and watched him plant one of the weird trees in the woods. It took him a matter of moments, and then he moved on some twenty feet or so and planted another. After about an hour, he'd built up a long line of them, all through the woods. Nasty looking things they were, black and glistening. Then I thought, am I going mad? Crouching in the woods in my night things and wellies, watching this man dig holes by moonlight? But I knew he was up to something, and I seemed to be the only one who realised it.
The days passed almost normally for a little while. The warm weather carried on and the villagers put on their short sleeves and sun dresses, at least the ladies did. Mike and the soldiers sweltered in their uniforms and continued to play with their radio sets and TVs. Sky gazing, they called it. The new Doctor's popularity in the village continued to grow. He even agreed to appear in the village Christmas show! The Reverend was delighted.

DOCTOR 2: Oh yes, of course. I'll be happy to play a part, Reverend Tonge. If I'm still here. If we're all still here, that is.
TONGE: Oh yes. Ah ha, hmm. Yes.

WIBBSEY [narrating]: I didn't say anything to anyone about the nocturnal gardening sessions. I was already aware that people thought I'd gone off my rocker. But then, just as the hallway was getting clear of those wretched plants, another lot arrived by army truck! I said nothing, but each night I followed him out and watched more of his antics. Each night he'd plant a new area around the village. Soon he'd covered north, south, east. There was only west left to go. And still he and Mike talked about how the *aliens* were on their way.

DOCTOR 2: Keep watching the skies, Mike. Any day now.
MIKE: We're all set, Doctor. As soon as anything happens, we'll know about it.

DOCTOR 2: Don't worry, Mrs W. Our marvellous Captain has it all in hand. This reminds me of when we were fighting the Great Intelligence on the Bakerloo line. Now, how about some cocoa?

WIBBSEY [narrating]: But I was in no mood for his cosy reassurances. I hadn't forgotten how nastily he'd spoken to me. I felt like putting pepper in his blessed cocoa. But then, one Friday afternoon, after he'd been at Nest Cottage for just over a fortnight, something incredible appeared in the skies above Hexford. It was just a hum at first, yet it was a sound I recognised, one which set all our teeth on edge. Then it became a deep throbbing we felt in our bellies and it raised the hairs on our arms. The crockery on the Welsh dresser started tinkling and chiming, the dogs began to bark and the birds fell silent, and then, a whole hour later, there was a huge roar and a smell like static electricity.

DOCTOR 2: Oh, my giddy Aunt. Didn't we tell them? Didn't we warn everyone?

WIBBSEY [narrating]: In my limited experience, as spaceships go it was pretty impressive. A silvery dish about half a mile across. It seemed to hover over us like a lid over a casserole dish. The noise of its engines died down and it was still, then it just sat there, way above us, underneath the clouds.

MIKE: They aren't communicating. They've scanned us, but that's been the only sign of life.
WIBBSEY: Well, who are they? What could they possibly want with Hexford?
MIKE: That's what we intend to find out. Doctor?
WIBBSEY: Where's he gone?
MIKE: Corporal Wyatt, see if you can find him, will you?

DEIRDRE: Just look at it, Tish. What do you think it wants with us?
TISH: It's magnificent, isn't it.
DEIRDRE: Yes, but shouldn't we get away? I've got my car keys.
TISH: Oh, my dear Deirdre, I hardly think your little hatchback's a match for that thing. It'd track you down in seconds.
TONGE: Everybody! The gentlemen from the Army are advising everyone to go back indoors, for our own safety.
DEIRDRE: Perhaps we should. After all, they were right, weren't they, that funny little man and Captain Yates.
TONGE: Come along, ladies, please. I think we should all go indoors and behave as if nothing unusual was happening.

WIBBSEY: I've been all over the house. There's no sign of him.
MIKE: I've sent the men to scout the village.
WIBBSEY: This is just typical. Just when you need him. I hope this makes you see sense. He's not trustworthy.
MIKE: He'll turn up. We can always rely on the Doctor.
WIBBSEY: But that *isn't* the Doctor. You've known the real Doctor long enough, and he isn't like that.
MIKE: He's just different from what you're used to. I've known several models. Admittedly not this one, but I heard so many stories about his bravery and his loyalty to Earth. I glimpsed him once during the business with the anti-matter.
WIBBSEY: Never mind that now. A few days ago he had a really nasty go at me, Mike. He was vicious.
MIKE: We've all been under a lot of strain.

WIBBSEY [narrating]: And then, suddenly, as if in a dream, as if all my prayers were being answered at once.

(The Tardis materialises outside.)
MIKE: Ah, you see? Here he is now .
WIBBSEY: Thank goodness for that.
MIKE: He must have nipped off to fetch the old girl. He said she was hidden away nearby.
WIBBSEY: He's got his own Tardis?

MIKE: Of course. As I keep saying, he's the real thing.

WIBBSEY [narrating]: We raced into the back garden, and there, in its usual place beside the picnic table, was the old familiar police box.

WIBBSEY + MIKE: Doctor!
MIKE: It's you!
DOCTOR: Of course it's me. Close your mouths, you two. You'll catch flies like that. Now, tell me at once what's going on. Did you know you had a vast spacecraft on your doorstep?
WIBBSEY: Oh, Doctor, I could hug you! Oh, you've no idea how pleased I am to see you!
DOCTOR: Well, it's nice to be wanted. It's been a long journey back and I rather think I've made it just in time.

(Knocking on door.)
DEIRDRE: (afraid) Oh, who's this now? (mutters in Welsh)
(Opens door.)
DEIRDRE: Oh, Doctor, it's you.
DOCTOR 2: Hello, Deirdre. May I come in?
DEIRDRE: Yes, of course.
DOCTOR 2: Best not leave your door open too long, with the aliens and so on.
(Closes door.)
DEIRDRE: The aliens?
DOCTOR 2: Yes, from that ship up there. You don't imagine they're going to stay up there forever, do you?
TISH: Oh, Doctor, how nice to see you. Deirdre and I thought we'd better stick together whilst the crisis was on.
DOCTOR 2: Indeed. Could I just have a look out of your back window?
DEIRDRE: Of course.
DOCTOR 2: Oh dear. Just as I thought.
DEIRDRE: What is it?
DOCTOR 2: Come and look in next door's garden. Oh, crumbs.
DEIRDRE: That's just Mrs Wibbsey and Captain Yates.
TISH: And another gentleman, in a scarf.
DEIRDRE: Oh, that's the other Doctor. I mean, Mrs Wibbsey's gentleman before you came on the scene.
DOCTOR 2: Oh no, that's torn it. That's ruined everything!
DEIRDRE: Bit of bad blood between you, is there? Things still a bit raw between her and him?
TISH: I thought Mister Yates said he was your colleague. Perhaps he's here to help. Aren't two Doctors better than one?
DOCTOR 2: On this occasion, no. That fellow is about to bring chaos and disaster tumbling around our ears. Is your back door unlocked?
TISH: Where are you off to?
DOCTOR 2: I've got er, things to attend to. Horticultural matters.
DEIRDRE: You're going gardening?
TISH: If you're interested, Doctor, perhaps I could show you the lovely beds which Deirdre has lain down in her garden.
DOCTOR 2: Well, I, er, oh, very well.

DOCTOR: Mrs Wibbsey, someone's been messing around with my equipment.

WIBBSEY [narrating]: It really was him, my Doctor, in his endless scarf and with his felt hat clamped down over his messy curls. He stormed around Nest Cottage frowning at the disarray, and finally coming downstairs with a face like thunder.

DOCTOR: And who's been sleeping in my bed?
MIKE: It's rather complicated to explain, Doctor.
DOCTOR: Try me.
MIKE: Funny thing is, the little chap seems to have, well, scarpered just before you arrived.
WIBBSEY: Yes, very funny. Shall I put the kettle on?
DOCTOR: Yes please, Mrs Wibbsey. What little chap, Mike?

MIKE: The other you. Well, I know it's happened to you before. Crossing your own time stream sort of thing.
DOCTOR: Wait a minute, wait a minute. The other me?
MIKE: Well, yes. You see, one of your earlier selves has been helping us with our investigations.
DOCTOR: I don't remember that. Which one?
MIKE: The happy fellow with the recorder and the Beatles haircut.
DOCTOR: Oh, him. Ah, well. Well, thanks to the Time Lords, some of his activities were wiped from my memory, so I suppose he could be here, mixed up in all of this.
WIBBSEY: What? Are you saying he really *is* you?
DOCTOR: Oh, it's possible. Well, well, Wibbs, you wait around all year for one Doctor to arrive, and then two turn up together. (laughs)
WIBBSEY: Since you mention it, it's been nine months since you left to take Alex and Boolin back to the Robotov Empire. Where've you been since then?
DOCTOR: It's been rather longer than that for me, Mrs Wibbsey. You must realise my life doesn't revolve around Nest Cottage, but now I'm here, it seems that trouble's arrived before me.

WIBBSEY [narrating]: Soon the Doctor, my Doctor, was a blur of activity as he raced around Nest Cottage. He peered furiously at the bits of equipment set up by the other Doctor, and when he saw the muddy saplings in the hallway, he cried out as if in pain.

DOCTOR: Argh!
MIKE: What is it?
DOCTOR: These saplings. They're incalculably dangerous. They shouldn't be anywhere near this planet.
WIBBSEY: Well, your other self's been planting them all around the village, going out at night and digging holes.
DOCTOR: What!
WIBBSEY: They're in a big ring all round Hexford.
MIKE: You never told me this, Mrs Wibbsey.
WIBBSEY: Well, you were so thick with him, Mike, it's been hard to tell *you* anything. In any case, I thought he was just one of these blessed guerilla gardeners some people talk about.
DOCTOR: These are no ordinary plants. They're biomesh trees. Biomechanical, with roots like steel tentacles. Once planted, they extrude and stretch underground, entwining with their neighbours to form an impenetrable mesh.
WIBBSEY: I did think they looked a bit sinister.
DOCTOR: And do you know something else a bit sinister? The underside of that spaceship is marked with a particular emblem. Something we first saw etched on the equipment on Rebel Moon.
WIBBSEY: Not that Serpent Crest thing?
DOCTOR: Yes. The mark of the Skishtari. Don't forget, we made off with one of their most precious objects, a sacred Gene Egg.
WIBBSEY: You don't think they've come after it, do you?
DOCTOR: It's a possibility.
MIKE: Never mind, Mrs Wibbsey. We'll sort them out and send them packing. We've dealt with this kind of thing dozens of times, haven't we, Doctor.
DOCTOR: Oh, yes. Alien invasions and what not, it's a doddle. Usually.
MIKE: And let's not forget we've got two Doctors on hand now. I'll get on to UNIT for more reinforcements.
DOCTOR: You do that, Captain Yates. Any more tea, Mrs Wibbsey?
(Door opens and closes.)
WIBBSEY: Never mind that. You said it's a doddle usually. Meaning what?
DOCTOR: I didn't want to alarm Mike. He does get himself worked up so. Oh, I've just had a rather nasty thought, Mrs Wibbsey. What if this particular alien visitation has me helping it?

WIBBSEY [narrating]: A little while later there came an urgent knocking at the front door. Standing there was Deirdre wotsit looking haggard and worried.

DEIRDRE: Oh please, may I come in, Mrs Wibbsey?

WIBBSEY: What's the matter?
DEIRDRE: I know you've got company, but I don't know who to turn to. You see, she's gone off with him.
WIBBSEY: Who has?
DEIRDRE: Tish, with your new man. I knew she'd taken a fancy to him, but I thought she was just showing him my gypsophila in the back garden. But when I went out, they'd vanished.
WIBBSEY: Oh, you'd better come in. Mike's out in his Jeep trying to radio for reinforcements, and the Doctor's having a temper tantrum in the Tar, er, in his workshop.
DEIRDRE: Oh yes, we saw the blue shed was back.
WIBBSEY: Now, about Tish and that other fellow.
DEIRDRE: Well, just as I said. They've gone off somewhere together. By the way, don't you think it's strange? A huge spaceship like that appears and you'd think there's be thousands of folk come to goggle at it, but where is everyone? Where are all the journalists?
DOCTOR: That's a very good question.
WIBBSEY: Oh, Doctor, this is Deirdre from next door, remember?
DOCTOR: Indeed I do. Did you ever sell that sheep's jawbone you had on your jumble sale table?
DEIRDRE: Oh, well, I'm not sure.
DOCTOR: Because it wasn't a sheep's jawbone. Anyway, it's a fair point about the lack of outside help. The Skishtari have been very clever. They arrived here by wormhole, so no disruption to the world's radar. They are now shielding themselves so well that no one, not one person in the outside world, knows what's going on inside the perimeter of this village. But the question is, what are they planning next?
DEIRDRE: And the other Doctor. Is Tish safe with him?
DOCTOR: For the moment I have no idea. Each one of those trees he's planted is radiating a very powerful set of magnetic beams, strong enough even to floor the Tardis.
WIBBSEY: What!
DOCTOR: She's reluctant to budge an inch. I was hoping to go up and talk to our visitors in person.
MIKE: Ah, we've got a problem.
DOCTOR: We know. Good old Mike.
MIKE: I've been trying to get in touch with UNIT. All radio signals are jammed, all the phones are dead. Everything is down. We're completely cut off.
WIBBSEY: All thanks to your Doctor's trees.
MIKE: His trees?
WIBBSEY: Those plant things you brought.
MIKE: He said they'd be very useful if the aliens turned up. He's been growing them in the UNIT nurseries for weeks.
WIBBSEY: I don't doubt it. He's got it in for all of us.
MIKE: Now, look here, this *is* the Doctor we're talking about.
DOCTOR: If it is, Mike, then I don't know what I'm playing at. Now listen.
(Big rumble.)
MIKE: What the?
DEIRDRE: It's an earthquake!
WIBBSEY: In Sussex?
DOCTOR: Oh no it isn't. Come and look outside.

WIBBSEY [narrating]: The floor was swaying madly as we made our way to the front door. Pictures were falling off the walls. The coat stand in the hallway toppled on its side. Then we were standing on the gravel path outside Nest Cottage, pointing at the sky and exclaiming. Other villagers were out on the green doing just the same. All around the gigantic spaceship the sky was fizzing and buzzing, like on a television when there's no aerial plugged in. Not only that, great jagged lines of electricity or something were radiating down all around the spaceship, capturing the village in a circle.

DOCTOR: Now what's he done?
MIKE: He? Are you saying this is the Doctor's work?
DOCTOR: Precisely, Mike. Between them, he and the Skishtari have set up a huge forcefield around Hexford. Those vertical lines are like magnetic anchors, each one hooked to one of his biomesh trees.

WIBBSEY: To do what?
DOCTOR: Who knows? But for the time being our movements are confined. Nobody gets in, nobody gets out. We're trapped.

DOCTOR 2: Ah ha! Isn't it pretty? Can you see how wonderful it all is, my dear?
TISH: But, what's happened? Planting that last tree just now, it's as if you set the air on fire. Please, tell me why are you doing this?
DOCTOR 2: Oh, I'm not doing anything bad, my dear. In fact, I'm putting things to right. Yes, that's what I'm doing.
TISH: We won't come to any harm, will we, Doctor?
DOCTOR 2: Of course not. I'm very fond of human beings. But you must understand what's at stake here. Something very precious.
TISH: You've put the whole village inside a bubble.
DOCTOR 2: In order that I may shield it. Hexford is wrapped inside a protective forcefield. Nobody can get in, and nobody can get out.
TISH: And you've done this with these trees of yours.
DOCTOR 2: Yes. Clever little things, aren't they?
TISH: I knew it. I told Deirdre it was all true. When I saw you on that stage, I *knew* you were telling the truth.
DOCTOR 2: I *always* tell the truth. Now, come along, back to the village. I think we should tell everyone how I have saved the day.

WIBBSEY [narrating]: Back on Hexford green, the villagers were running around hysterically.

TONGE: Everyone, into the Church Hall, please. We must stay together. We must make a united stand.

WIBBSEY [narrating]: Deirdre went across to join them, but the Doctor was intent on staying in the cottage. I had other ideas, though. That scruffy little man had made my life a misery for the past few weeks. Now that he'd been unmasked as a traitor, I was going to give him what for. I marched straight out of Nest Cottage full of high dudgeon and righteous ire.

TONGE: Mrs Wibbsey, please, come into the Church Hall. It's not safe out. The sky is on fire!
WIBBSEY: It's an alien force shield, Reverend Tonge.
TONGE: It's the Day of Judgement. I can hardly believe it. I mean, you read about it, and vaguely hope it won't happen.
WIBBSEY: Calm down, man.
TONGE: But now it has! It's here! But I must protect my flock. Quickly, you can help with the urn.
WIBBSEY: Strong sweet tea all round, eh?
TONGE: Where is Captain Yates? His soldiers have been helping me with the elderly, but they need a figure of authority to look up to.

WIBBSEY [narrating]: It was then that I saw his nibs himself, the bogus Doctor, marching back into the heart of the village, and Tish Madoc with him. She looked terrified but excited too. I headed over to them.

DOCTOR 2: Oh dear, Tish. Mrs Wibbsey doesn't look very happy.
WIBBSEY: Here, what the devil have you two been up to?
TISH: Hello, dear.
WIBBSEY: What have you done?
DOCTOR 2: I shall try to explain, Mrs Wibbsey. You needn't thank me, of course, but I've erected a force shield to keep us safe from those horrible alien beings up there.
WIBBSEY: Rubbish. Those aliens are helping you to generate it, keep us all locked up within the village.
TISH: Dear Mrs Wibbsey, how could you possibly know anything about it?
WIBBSEY: I know that it's the Skishtari up there, and that this man is league with them.
DOCTOR 2: Poppycock! I don't know where you get your ideas from.
WIBBSEY: As a matter of fact, they're from someone who is going to be very interested in meeting you. Very interested indeed.

TISH: She's raving mad. Let's leave the poor thing.
WIBBSEY: And you, Tish Madoc, you ought to be ashamed, hanging around with this imposter.
DOCTOR 2: Oh, I can assure you, Mrs W, I'm no imposter. Now, if you'll forgive me, I must go and speak with the villagers and allay their fears.

WIBBSEY [narrating]: And with that, he turned smartly away, though not before giving me one last sickening sneer. Tish followed him like a lap dog into the village hall. Above our heads, the skies were the colour of tomato soup, boiling over in the pan. They gave an angry crackle, and I dashed back towards Nest Cottage. I was halfway across the green when there was a weird rippling, creaking noise. I strained to look into the distance and was amazed to see the edges of the village starting to lift up, like a carpet being pulled up from the floorboards.

MIKE: Mrs Wibbsey! Get inside! The Doctor's in the Tardis. Go and join him!
TONGE: Judgement Day has come!

DOCTOR 2: Everyone must keep calm. It's no use getting into a tizzy. You'll all be quite safe, I promise you.
DEIRDRE: What's that device you're working? Is it something to do with all this?
DOCTOR 2: It controls my special trees and the signals they are emitting. Now, quiet!
TISH: Please tell me that you're not causing all this mess.
DOCTOR 2: Causing it? I'm trying to prevent it, you silly woman. I'm trying to save all our lives. Can't you see? Without me, you'd all be dead already. I'm all that is standing between the village of Hexford and the abyss!

(Tardis door.)
WIBBSEY: Doctor, something's lifting the ground up out there.
DOCTOR: Yes, I know. I've been monitoring things from in here.
WIBBSEY: Oh, got it all under control, have you?
DOCTOR: Mrs Wibbsey, there's a vast spaceship stuffed with serpents hovering over our heads, and it's snared this tiny village in a powerful fishing net. Almost undoubtedly it's being aided and abetted by another version of me and his forest of biomesh trees. How on Earth could I have it all under control?
WIBBSEY: I only asked. By now you usually come up with some marvellous plan.
DOCTOR: Well, thank you for that, but this time I haven't. Those magnetic ropes aren't merely giving the village a good shaking, they are uprooting it.
WIBBSEY: What!
DOCTOR: Only by a matter of metres, but even so.
WIBBSEY: But why?
DOCTOR: Isn't it obvious? To get to something underneath it.

WIBBSEY [narrating]: His hands were a blur, dancing across the control panels of what he called the central console of the Tardis. His face was hawk-like with concentration.

(Tardis engines stutter.)
DOCTOR: The Tardis and I are trying to fight back.
WIBBSEY: How? What can you do against that great big spaceship?
DOCTOR: The Tardis is pretty powerful herself, you know, for an old lady. She still has a few special tricks up her sleeve. I'm projecting a gravity pocket to counterbalance the Skishtari magnetic pull. There, that should give them something to think about.
(Bang!)
DOCTOR: Ah! Oh! Whoa!
WIBBSEY: Doctor! Now what?
DOCTOR: Someone's increased the power on their side. They're putting up a fight.
WIBBSEY: It's like a tug of war.
DOCTOR: Nothing else for it, we'll just have to increase *our* pulling power.
WIBBSEY: Doctor, look at the scanner. The whole village is coming away from the ground. Whatever you're doing, do more of it.
DOCTOR: Come on, old girl.

TONGE: Almighty Father, forgive us our sins.
MIKE: Don't panic, everyone. The Doctor's got everything in hand.
DOCTOR 2: I have?
MIKE: I'll have words with you later on.
DEIRDRE: What? What has he got in hand?
MAN 2: What's happening to us?
MAN: It's like he said before, we're all heading to Hell.
MAN 2: But we're going up, not down.
MAN 3: Some of us are counting on going to Heaven.
TONGE: Hexford is a peaceful, God-fearing village.
DEIRDRE: Then why is this happening to us?
(Objects breaking.)
TONGE: I, I don't have any answers for you, Deirdre.
TISH: Doctor, can't you tell us?
DOCTOR 2: Now please, I have to be left alone. This is very close work. If I just boost the power a little.
DEIRDRE: Surely fiddling with that thing won't do any good.
TISH: You can do it, can't you, Doctor? You can fight these aliens off.
DOCTOR 2: I'm trying to, my dear, but someone is fighting back.
MIKE: Go on, Doctor, give it all you've got.
DEIRDRE: Yes, full power!

DOCTOR: They've upped the power again.
WIBBSEY: Feels like it.
DOCTOR: If they're not careful, they'll tear the whole village apart. But I simply can't let them win.

MIKE: It feels as if this whole place is going to shake apart at any second.
DOCTOR 2: Do I have your permission to push it to the next level?
DEIRDRE: Yes! Save us!
TONGE: I'm not awfully sure about this.
TISH: What have we got to lose?
MIKE: Those trees of yours, Doctor, they've got to save us. Increase the power.
DOCTOR 2: Very well. Here goes. When I say get down, get down!

WIBBSEY [narrating]: For a while it looked as if we were going to win, and the village was going to be drawn back to Earth. But those menacing saplings with their whip-like roots were holding firm. And then the alien magnetic ropes seemed receive a sudden power boost. The village rose even higher, earth and rocks falling away from under it as it went up.

DOCTOR: We're losing it. Hang on tight, Wibbs! We're going to dig our heels in.
WIBBSEY: I can't take much more of this.
DOCTOR: You may not have to. It seems that the Skishtari are entering the fray at last.

WIBBSEY [narrating]: A vast rent had opened up in the fuzzy grey sky way above our village. Beyond it on the scanner we could see the tumbling, spiralling chaos of a wormhole in Time and Space. In the village hall, suspended thousands of metres above the Earth, the villagers could see that gaping maw all too clearly. They were fast approaching a tunnel that would take them nobody knew where.

TONGE: Saints preserve us! What now?
MIKE: Any ideas, Doctor?
DOCTOR 2: It seems that our alien friends have opted to intervene and break the deadlock.
DEIRDRE: Are we all going to die?
DOCTOR 2: The village is being transported with its atmosphere intact. None of us will die yet, providing we sit tight and see how this plays out.
MIKE: It doesn't look good.
DOCTOR 2: We're getting close to the mouth of the tunnel!
DEIRDRE: Ooo, no!
TISH: Everyone, grab hold of something stable.

DOCTOR 2: Oh crumbs, it's all gone a little bit wrong!
(All cry out.)

WIBBSEY [narrating]: Time and Space spiralled all about them, and with a sickening crunch, the village of Hexford slipped its terrestrial moorings. It teetered and tipped and slid sideways with an almighty screech, ducking away from the Tardis's influence and all our efforts to stop it floating away. And then, all of a sudden, both the spaceship and the village were gone. The sky flared brilliant red, and then went back to normal. The dreadful wormhole churned and flickered, and quickly shut.

DOCTOR: Oh, Wibbsey, we failed.
WIBBSEY: It swallowed them up.
DOCTOR: It looked pretty unstable, too. The Skishtari don't know what they're meddling with. I doubt they'll stay tethered to the village for long.
WIBBSEY: But why haven't we gone with it?
DOCTOR: As I said, the old girl dug her feet in. She won't be whisked away by anyone.
WIBBSEY: But all those people. What's going to happen to everyone?
DOCTOR: The force shield will preserve their atmosphere for a while. If they separate from the Skishtari ship then hopefully that shambles in a frock coat can fix up the force shielding again to make sure they survive. But I'm afraid I have no idea where they're going to end up. Mike, Deirdre, Nest Cottage, sucked into a wormhole. It's something of a catastrophe.
WIBBSEY: So the Skishtari didn't plan for this to happen?
DOCTOR: I imagine they only wanted to lift Hexford up and retrieve the Gene Egg from underneath. Speaking of which, I think we'd better take a look outside.
(Tardis door opens.)
DOCTOR: Mind your feet, Wibbs. The ground's pretty ravaged.
WIBBSEY: Oh. Oh, my word. It's so desolate.
DOCTOR: Haven't left much behind, have they.
WIBBSEY: Just the Tardis and a few foundations.
DOCTOR: Even the graves in the churchyard have gone.
WIBBSEY: Your other self did this, Doctor.
DOCTOR: It wounds me to think that that might be the case. Is it too much to hope he's a double agent, pretending to work for the Skishtari but secretly plotting against them?
WIBBSEY: If only you could remember.
DOCTOR: Mrs Wibbsey, any minute now someone is going to notice that a village has gone missing. This place will be swarming with officials and gawpers.
WIBBSEY: We'd better get away, then.
DOCTOR: Yes, but not before we've retrieved something.
WIBBSEY: Do you mean this?

WIBBSEY [narrating]: And there it was, nestled away in its lead casket, deep in the foundations of the cottage, just where we'd placed it a hundred and fifty years earlier.

DOCTOR: The Skishtari Gene Bank.
WIBBSEY: And it's unharmed. Not even a crack in it.
DOCTOR: No omelettes today, then. They took the whole village, and left behind the one thing they'd come for. I suppose in that respect at least, we've won the day, Wibbs.
WIBBSEY: But once they realise they haven't got it, surely they're going to come looking again.
DOCTOR: That's why we're going to take it with us. It'll be safe in the Tardis.
WIBBSEY: And then where are we going?
DOCTOR: Well, after Mike and the others, of course. Somehow, we've got to discover where that wormhole has whizzed them.
WIBBSEY: Thank goodness for that.
DOCTOR: We'll teach them that they can't go stealing our homes and our friends, not to mention our enemies. Come on, Wibbs. (Tardis door) Back inside.
(Tardis door closes. Controls set.)
WIBBSEY: I hope we manage to bring Hexford home again one day.
DOCTOR: So do I, my dears, so do I. This is it, Mrs Wibbsey. Ha, ha! One final chase across Time and Space.